

Title: The Jury's Still Out: Exploring the Relationship Between Mass Media and Criminal Cases
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Mass media considerably affects countless aspects of our lives due to recent strides in technology, especially that of social media. Scholars suggest even criminal investigations, arrests and adjudication processes are also impacted by mass media (Buckler 2018). Some question, however, whether incorporating mass media and social media technologies into such investigations has more beneficial or detrimental effects (Sacco 1982). While mass media ensures public awareness and can be a tool to solve crimes, it often slanders innocent people, inaccurately portrays stories, and may negatively affect juries and courtrooms (Hewitt et al. 2007, Snoddy 2007). We draw on several peer-reviewed publications to first discuss the potential beneficial and detrimental effects of mass media on criminal investigations. We then conduct in-depth interviews with two police officers, two detectives and two lawyers to qualitatively capture mass media's impact on each phase of a criminal investigation. We expect to find that mass media and social media technology do, in fact, have a strong relationship with recent criminal investigations. While data may show both beneficial and detrimental aspects of this relationship, we suggest there are more benefits than costs for the criminal justice system overall. We argue the criminal justice system must adapt to mitigate possible detrimental aspects (stigma, slander, inaccuracies, etc.) in order to embrace the advantages that mass media and social media technology can provide in all aspects of criminal investigations.

References

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